

Check against delivery

**Preparatory Committee
For the 2006 Review Conference
On the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and
Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its
Aspects**

Mr. Julien Temple,

Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF

for the Thematic Discussion on Human/Humanitarian and other Dimensions

13 January, 2006, New York

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Rowe on his election as Chairman for the Preparatory Committee. UNICEF is particularly pleased by his commitment to ensuring that the safety, security and welfare of people are placed **at the centre** of our discussions.

We are also pleased that the thematic debates begin with this cluster, as it provides an opportunity to emphasize specific measures in the Programme of Action, which have a dramatic impact on children and the humanitarian dimension of this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

As we have seen repeated throughout the world, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and their widespread accumulation and misuse have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences, which pose serious threats to peace and reconciliation, security, stability and sustainable development. Likewise, the number of victims from this violence stretches into the millions, **many of whom are children and women**.

Caught up in conflict or armed violence, children's rights continue to be grossly violated as they fall victim to disease, malnutrition, displacement and brutal violence. Whether they are drawn in as fighters, deliberately targeted as civilians or forced into becoming perpetrators, children are bearing enormous consequences. Sexual abuse, violence, and exploitation, frequently associated with this context, leave lasting psychosocial wounds and directly contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS. In Rwanda, it is estimated that at least 250,000 women and girls were raped during the genocide of 1994.

The end of conflict does not mean the end of violence for children and women. In research from Burundi in 2004, although noting a mild improvement in human security for women subsequent to the November 2003 ceasefire, they also attested to an increase in three other forms of armed violence specifically: revenge (private justice), sexual predation, and illicit economic gain. These developments were determined to be partly due to the fact that automatic weapons, homemade rifles, pistols and hand grenades were regularly sold, rented or loaned and used in armed robbery and road ambushes. Armed rape often accompanied these attacks.

The Programme of Action calls for measures to address the special needs of children affected by armed conflict,

In this regard, UNICEF advocates on behalf of children and provides emergency assistance to children, families, communities and governments in crisis-affected countries. In addition, UNICEF has developed *Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies*, which outline UNICEF's core response in protecting and caring for children and women.

In its recent resolution 60/68, “addressing the negative humanitarian and development impact of the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms”, the General Assembly recognised the importance of ensuring that the needs of women and girl combatants, and dependants, be addressed in Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration programmes; and stated a commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of children in armed conflict.

As we prepare for the 2006 Review Conference, UNICEF would like to encourage delegations to reaffirm these commitments through their incorporation into the Review Conference debates and outcome documents. This process will help amplify the humanitarian aspects of the Programme of Action and will bring greater attention to the need to protect the rights and welfare of children affected by armed conflict and armed violence.

Further, the Programme of Action contains key measures of central significance for children in the area of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration.

UNICEF and its partners are actively contributing to DDR programmes, and in recent years have undertaken advocacy, demobilisation and reintegration for children in 19 countries. Through this work, it has become clear that the release of children is only the beginning of an often long and difficult process. UNICEF’s lessons learned in this area demonstrate that successful DDR is crucial to ensure that children are not re-recruited.

In spite of the thousands of children that benefit from DDR programmes, it is vitally important that further commitment is put forward to ensure that women and girls are included in these activities and that the pleas for increased support to “reintegration” are answered.

Research published in 2004 noted that very few girls, as compared to boys, have been demobilised through official processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over the period December 2003 through September 2004, over 1,700 boys - but only 23 girls - were demobilised to four international NGOs. In September 2004, CARE identified and verified the cases of an additional 112 girls in Maniema Province. The study found however, that girls are recruited or abducted as extensively as boys and that thousands of girls are still with armed groups, while thousands of others have already escaped and found their way back to their communities or extended families. These girls and women are missing a fundamental step in recovering from violence, as they have not participated in a DDR process.

In addition, UNICEF is supporting implementation of the Programme of Action through its participation in the development of the UN Integrated Standards for DDR. Specifically, UNICEF has led the development of the principles related to children and DDR. Collectively, the DDR Standards represent a UN-wide effort among over 20 agencies, funds and departments to build coherence on how to manage DDR **in a peacekeeping and peace building context**. Based on relevant provisions of international law, field experience and lessons learned, the Standards will be launched in 2006. **Among some of the important recommendations are to ensure that DDR processes recognise the specific needs of women and children, and**

capitalise on and promote grassroots peace building and disarmament initiatives of women and youth.

Parallel to this, UNICEF is leading a global effort to review and revive the *Cape Town Principles on the Prevention of Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and Demobilisation and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa*. The objective of the review is to ensure broader political endorsement and incorporate lessons from regions beyond Africa. The process will culminate in a consultation at the end of 2006.

Although much of our discussion focuses on children affected by armed conflict, the impact from the widespread proliferation and misuse of small arms in other countries and regions ‘at peace’ can be equally devastating. As we have learned from data gathered in Brazil, more than 100 Brazilians die every day by guns, most of them young men from poor communities. In Rio de Janeiro, young men are more likely to be killed by firearms than all other external causes of death combined, including traffic accidents, illness, and other kinds of injuries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Programme of Action contains a third measure, of immediate relevance for children: awareness education and the promotion of a culture of peace.

UNICEF’s programmes are supportive of this measure, as they possess an ‘education for peace’ character, whereby education seeks to promote peace and tolerance, and not fuel hatred and suspicion. **An important facet of this, is our promotion of schools as ‘zones of peace’**, which create an environment in which children can learn and develop, safe from violence and free from the presence of small arms.

Complimenting this effort, UNICEF engages with partners to undertake capacity building concerning peace and tolerance, risk education, and conflict resolution.

UNICEF would like to encourage delegations to bring this issue into greater prominence at the Review Conference and in its official outcome documents. An increased commitment in this area will help facilitate confidence building, reconciliation, and help teach alternatives to the culture of the gun. Further, it will also encourage enabling initiatives such as “schools as zones of peace”, where children, the most vulnerable in our society, have an environment in which to learn, grow, and be safe from violence and the presence of small arms.

Finally Mr. Chairman,

Although the UN small arms process has helped bring about some of the important achievements which have taken place, UNICEF also takes note of the observation by a Member State that implementation has not been consistent or even for all.

In particular, the Programme of Action highlights the critical need for action-oriented research aimed at facilitating greater awareness and better understanding of the nature and scope of the problems associated with the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects.

UNICEF feels that with greater support to this measure, including situation analysis and assessments, it will be possible to bring better clarity to the multi-dimensional factors related to the humanitarian impact of the proliferation and misuse of small arms. Subsequently, we will be able to establish appropriate mechanisms to systematically address the impact of small arms at the global, regional and local levels.

In this regard, UNICEF and various partners are collaborating in the landmark “UN Study on Violence against Children”. The study will provide a detailed global picture of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children and young people. It will also propose clear recommendations for action to prevent and reduce such violence.

Complimenting this effort, and as called for by the UN Security Council resolution 1612, UNICEF joins with others in the development of a system to monitor and report on egregious rights violations perpetrated against children in conflict-affected areas. The improved flow and quality of information will ultimately inform and enhance protection measures for children.

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views. They are shaped by our work on behalf of children in over 150 countries over the last 58 years.

UNICEF looks forward to the Review Conference to discuss progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action, but more importantly, to seize the historic opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitments and to incorporate new and relevant initiatives into the UN small arms process that strengthen and contribute to the protection of children and their communities, and advance humanity.

I urge you to remain conscious of the special needs of all children and the central role they play in our future.

Our success will provide a safer world and a more hopeful future.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.